



MONTANA DNRC Conversation



Winter 2008

In this Issue...

Joe Lamson...

Meet the new Deputy Director

DNRC Logo Contest...

Enter for notoriety and prize money

And the Award Goes to...

Ray Beck Receives MACD President's Award

DNRC Christmas Activities...

Adopt a family, tree excursions and more!

Super seeding: New equipment bolsters fire rehab efforts, saves money

DNRC's Fire and Aviation Division has taken post-wildfire rehabilitation to new heights with its purchase of a "seed bucket."

The decision to acquire the seeder came in September, after Rob Ethridge, Forestry Assistance Bureau Chief, compared the yearly expense of contracting for aerial re-seeding

or ground crews with the one-time investment in a seed bucket that DNRC could operate with its own choppers. Garry Williams, Central Land Office Area Manager, said the cost savings proved significant.

"In most cases we end up re-seeding by hand, which requires a lot of personnel," Williams said. "Time is also a factor – it's often difficult to get all the seeding done before winter. Aerial seeding allows you to cover a very large area in a short period of time."

Aviation Supervisor Chris Dargan drove to Portland, Ore., in October to pick up the seeder. Calling it a "bucket," he said, is completely misleading.

"It's really a custom piece of equipment," said Dargan. "The Aviation section called the manufacturer and told them what we needed. They had four different models available and they modified one specifically for us."



The N387M Helicopter takes the seed bucket for an afternoon flight.

The device holds about 3,000 pounds of seed and has its own gas-powered motor. Suspended by a cable from the helicopter, the bucket is controlled by the co-pilot, who operates a switch that

opens and closes a gate to disperse the seed. Dargan said there's "a learning curve for everybody" involved, especially for the pilot and co-pilot.

"You have to calibrate the machine for how much seed comes out, and it took us a while to get that figured out," he said. "The speed and altitude of the chopper are critical, too. All those things play a role in how effective it is."

Fire & Aviation put the seed bucket to work on several wildfire rehab projects this fall – the Meriwether, Chippy Creek and Jocko Lakes fires. How did it go? Dargan said the results won't be known until spring.

"Once we get dialed in to how the machine operates – it's got its own quirks – we'll be in great shape," Dargan said. "We're in the process now of writing an operating manual for it, and we'll have plenty of chances to use it in the future."

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Winter greetings – but where's the snow? Fortunately, the mountains are getting good blankets! As the seasons change, so is DNRC. Given that over 16% of DNRC staff members are eligible for retirement in the next 5 years, we are experiencing the exodus of our co-workers. Our chief legal counsel, Tim Hall, along with Bruce Swick of CSD, as well as valued employees in all divisions retired during 2007. We have also added to our staff mix! Please welcome Joe Lamson, the new deputy director, and Candy West, chief legal counsel.



Staff turnover is not the only issue the agency faces. At a recent management retreat, we spent a good deal of time discussing natural resource management challenges in Montana. We see two overarching themes that impact all divisions of DNRC significantly: Growth and Demographic change, Drought and Climate change. Much of our discussion also related to the issues that were common in the agency-wide roundtable talks of two years ago. As we reviewed the needs and direction of the

Continued on back page

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Meet Joe Lamson

There's a new deputy in town.

In October, Joe Lamson of Helena was hired as DNRC deputy director. Formerly the communications and legislative director at the Office of Public Instruction, Joe has years of experience in policy making, strategic planning and the 90-day scramble that is the Legislature. He settled into his new DNRC office on November 19.

As deputy director, Joe will oversee DNRC's communications and public information efforts, including the supervision of its public information officers; he will also work on upper-level management activities, special projects, and the to-be-implemented natural resource restoration program.

Joe has more than enough to keep him busy, but happily agreed to answer a few questions – as a longtime media strategist, he knows the value of getting the word out. Here's what he had to say:

You've worked in state government and the public sector for some time. What have you learned about being successful in an agency setting?

I worked for the Office of Public Instruction for the past 11 years and prior to that as the state director for Congressman Pat Williams for 14 years.

Success depends on valuing the contributions of all members of the agency team and providing them with the necessary resources to complete their tasks. I think it's important to recognize and celebrate the good work and accomplishments of our co-workers.



Joe Lamson

What's your idea of a great weekend?

Spending time with friends and family in Montana's out-of-doors.

What are your goals for the first six months with DNRC?

I'm looking forward to getting to know the DNRC staff and how I can best work with you to meet the agency's mission.

Tell us about your family ...

Laurie and I arrived in Helena in 1974. We've raised three sons, Josh, Jon, and Jeff. Josh works at an alternative school in Boulder, Colorado.

Jon left full-time "cowboying" and is attending MSU-Bozeman in range science. Jeff and his wife, Meghan, manage and maintain rental properties in Missoula. Laurie is the director of the fiscal division at the Department of Public Health and Human Services. As empty nesters, we enjoy Montana's rivers, golfing, birding, hiking, gardening, gourmet cooking, and travel.

What's the last good book you've read? What did you enjoy about it?

I'm about halfway through Ken Follett's new novel, *World Without End*. It's a sequel to his 1989 work, *Pillars of the Earth*, a novel set in 12th Century England. The '89 book was one of my favorites. The new book is set 200 years into the future, and it's not necessary to have read the first one. I enjoy the novels because they totally immerse you in a different time and culture, wrapped around a good tale. It's an interesting place to visit when you don't have to worry about the plague, plotting clerics, or some minor nobleman running you through with a sword for no particular reason.

Thumbs Up, Thumbs Down



Bruce Swick, Patty Green, and Tim Hall, three of CSD's newly retired.



Thumbs down and up! 10 longtime employees from DNRC retired at the end of December. We'll miss all of you, but wish you well in your future endeavors. Tune in to the employee intranet for pictures and goodbye letters.



Thumbs Up to DNRC's new Google search engine. The new search engine should be more effective in finding web pages of interest instead of PDFs.



Thumbs up! A \$14.4 million loan provided by CARRD and their Water Pollution Control State Revolving Fund (WPCSRF) will enable the City of Kalispell to upgrade and expand its advanced wastewater treatment facility, keeping pace with rapid population growth while continuing to protect water quality in the Flathead Basin. This is the largest loan in the history of the program. To date, Montana's SRF programs have issued more than \$43 million in low-interest loans to cities, town, and water/sewer districts this year.



It was a busy summer for DNRC Fire crew. Statewide, DNRC Initial Attack fought 502 fires this season, totaling 148,303 acres, not including false alarms or mutual aid responses. A big thumbs up to all those who helped support our fire services during this heavy season.



Ross Campbell recently mapped the locations of active projects funded by CARDD programs. This is the prototype of an interactive map that will be on our website in 2008. It is an impressive graphic representation of how DNRC project funding blankets the state.



Thumbs up to the completion of the FY2007 Annual Report. An online version can be found at www.dnrc.mt.gov/about_us/publications.asp.

Ray Beck Receives MACD President's Award



Ray Beck

The Montana Association of Conservation Districts recently awarded Ray Beck the prestigious President's Award. The honor goes to an individual who has made a significant contribution to the conservation of natural resources in Montana. At the MACD conference in Bozeman this fall, Buzz Mattelin, outgoing president, told a packed room of conservation district members from across the state: "Ray Beck is a person who truly leads by example. I have been on his ranch and seen how he practices conservation in every aspect of land management. And professionally, Ray has been a constant advocate of conservation throughout Montana. This award goes to someone who is dedicated to natural resource conservation and developing effective partnerships among landowners, state agencies and conservation districts."

A Day in the Life of a DNRC Employee...

DNRC is looking for you! As a highlight on what we do as an agency, we're looking for employees who are willing to write up a "My life as a DNRC Employee" or "A Day in the life of..." article for the website. Almost like those American Express commercials, or even the HP Commercials these days, but better!

We'd love to hear from representatives across DNRC to write an entertaining first-person article on their jobs. Articles would be used on our website for recruiting and division highlights, as well as for posters and recruiting material. Contact [Janel Favero](mailto:Janel.Favero@dnrc.mt.gov) for more information.

Trust Land Management Division presents \$49.5 million to Montana Schools

Linda McCulloch accepts the two checks from Trust Land Management Division to students from the Richard Wirak's fourth-grade class from Jefferson Elementary School. The money for the checks is generated from Montana State Trust Lands. The two checks were \$48,609,316 for Common Schools and \$895,846 for the Technology Acquisition Fund, which is used by schools for the purchase of computers, etc.



DNRC Holiday Activities

Carolyn Wolf and Jeff Dobb carry their Christmas trees down the hill during the annual Christmas tree cutting. (below)

Santa's helpers pose in front of the Christmas Tree before the big delivery. Top from left: Carol Loomis, Emily Greene, Mo Leo, Tricia Schiltz, Santa Claus, Lucy Richards, Dan Draper, Patty Greene. Bottom: Ronda Tallerico, Kathy Nolan, Mrs. Santa. (top right)

Santa visits with one of the families DNRC gifted this season. (middle)

DNRC employees in Helena were busy just before Christmas wrapping presents for families adopted by the agency for the holidays. A basket raffle in December raised more than \$1,300, which was used to purchase gifts and items needed by several families. Helping wrap gifts are, from left: Kris Hardman, Heidi Handford, Kathi Nolan, Ronda Tallerico, Linda Stangland and Tammi Berkas. (bottom photo)



Seeking Creative Minds, DNRC on the hunt for new logo

It's a new year, and time for a new DNRC logo – maybe *your* DNRC logo.

The existing brand has served admirably since the department was reorganized in 1996. Over the past several months, division leaders have expressed interest in developing a new logo, one that can take DNRC into the next decade and beyond. After some discussion, it was decided the quest for a fresh design should begin with all DNRC employees.

Logo Search 2008 (think 'Star Search' with fluorescent light and BMPs) is of-

ficially under way. Take your best shot at creating a new DNRC logo and submit it to Public Information Officer John Grassy. Your design can be created electronically on computer or drawn by hand on paper. The deadline for submissions is April 15.

A selection committee – still to be determined – will judge the entries and pick the winner. If your design is chosen, you'll receive a DNRC shirt and \$100 in cash.

For more details, contact John Grassy, Ann Bauchman or Janel Favero. Good luck!

Montana's Regional Water Systems

Rick Duncan, DNRC Regional Water System Coordinator, recently published the premier edition of the regional water system newsletter. The newsletter describes the latest accomplishments, funding successes, legislative news, and upcoming activities for Montana's four regional water systems. You can subscribe to an e-copy or a hard copy of the newsletter by emailing [Rick](#). The newsletter is on the [CARDD website](#).

La Nina events affecting weather across the globe

According to the national Climate Prediction Center ENSO (El Nino – Southern Oscillation), diagnostic discussion of December 6, a moderately strong La Nina event remains dominant over equatorial waters of the Pacific Ocean and is likely to persist "through February with a gradual weakening thereafter." So what does an ongoing La Nina event mean to Montana and its climate outlook for coming months? Generally, it means that we are likely to see colder winter temperatures with above average precipitation.

The relationship between the Northwest and Southwest U.S. is one of the strongest anomaly signals of most ENSO events whether an El Nino or La Nina. During El Nino events the Pacific Northwest and to a slightly lesser degree, the area of Montana east of the Continental Divide, tend to be warmer and drier than average during winter months and the Southwest U.S.

cooler and wetter than normal. And when a La Nina event is underway, the opposite is usually true – the Southwest is warmer and drier and the Northwest tends to be cooler and moister¹.

Some experts hold that the temperature forecast during ENSO events has a higher degree of reliability than does the precipitation forecast. The Northern Rockies usually benefit from La Nina with average or better snow water equivalent at the season peak accumulation around April 15, which with some luck, results in better runoff and water supply conditions as the mountain snowpack melts in spring.

To see how other La Nina years with an early, strong onset of favorable negative anomalies compare with 2007-2008², and look at the last graph for the Multivariate ENSO Index for 6 strong La Nina events since 1949 vs. recent conditions. Only in 1964-65 did the La Nina

conditions weaken quickly. The other years, La Nina conditions persisted through the following spring and summer. However, you can see that the La Nina event that was second soonest to weaken was 1988-89 one of the worst wildfire and drought years on record!

For now we can hope that the current La Nina event provides the Northern Rockies with average or above average snowpack and cool enough temperatures that we do not see rain instead of snow in our mountains this winter or early season warm events that melt our snowpack prematurely.

¹ http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/analysis_monitoring/enso_advisory/ensodisc.pdf

² <http://www.cdc.noaa.gov/people/klaus.wolter/MEI/#loadings>

Director, continued from front page

agency, we articulated strategic goals that stem from our mission and challenges we face.

Here's the roadmap for the agency!

DNRC Mission Statement:

"Helping to ensure that Montana's land and water resources provide benefits for present and future generations"

DNRC Challenges:

Growth and Demographic Change in Montana – Over the past decade, Montana has experienced substantial growth in rural subdivisions and changes in land ownership that impact our land and water resources.

Drought and Climate Change - Because of extended drought, forest health decline,

decreased stream flows, and reduced snowpack, Montana land and water resources are stressed and adaptive mitigation is needed.

DNRC Strategic Goals:

Given the mission of the agency and the current challenges from growth and drought, here are the strategic goals of the agency:

- Achieve adaptability in agency resource allocation to address the rapidly changing land and water needs of Montana
- Analyze staffing and agency structural needs in the face of retirements and changing competencies required of employees
- Increase outreach and involvement from stakeholder groups and the public regarding agency programs and challenges

• Implement strong stewardship practices for Montana's land and water resources

As we prepare for the next legislative session, we will be incorporating these goals into our requests and into our work plans. These will also be discussed at staff meetings on various levels. We ask you - as the backbone of DNRC - for your input and suggestions to help implement our goals. After all, the "next" generation will soon be managing our resources and adapting to change – with a little help from us!

Mary



Visit DNRC's website
www.dnrc.mt.gov

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